

INTERNET/INTRANET SERVICES

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This directive is revised to include modifications required to ensure that established policy for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees in establishing, managing, maintaining, and presenting information on VA's Internet/Intranet sites and sites operating on behalf of VA, and non-VA entities contracted to operate for VA, and/or related services reflect evolving best practices for customer service, technology and security.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES: The directive redefines the organizational responsibilities for all web activities that govern and/or are related to posting, editing, maintaining, and removing files to or from the Internet and Intranet. Important modifications to this directive are the enhanced emphases on privacy-related issues, security requirements, accessibility requirements, the utilization of web applications and tools for enhanced performance and oversight, and the establishment of the VA Chief Information Officer's (CIO's) Information Technology Operations (ITO) (Office of Information and Technology (005)), as the entity which will have enforcement authority over all VA web activities. Failure to comply with the requirements could result in serious consequences, including the removal of web pages and/or VA websites from publication.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: VA Chief Information Officer's (CIO's) Information Technology Operations (ITO) (Office of Information and Technology (005)).

4. RELATED HANDBOOK: VA Handbook 6102, Internet/Intranet Services.

5. RESCISSION: VA Directive 6102, Internet/Intranet dated March 15, 2001.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE
SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

/s/
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INTERNET/INTRANET SERVICES

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

a. This directive sets forth policies and responsibilities for the planning, design, maintenance, support, and any other functions related to the creation and the administration of a VA Internet site, VA Intranet site, sites operating on VA's behalf and non-VA entities contracted to operate for VA. This directive applies to all organizational elements in the Department.

b. This policy applies to all individuals designing, maintaining, and/or providing oversight to VA Internet and Intranet sites and sites operating on VA's behalf, including but not limited to, full time and part time employees, contractors, interns, and volunteers. This policy applies to all VA Internet/Intranet domains and servers that utilize VA resources on va.gov and on other domains which have received specific permission granted by the Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology to operate on a domain other than va.gov that operate on VA's behalf or with VA funding, including but not limited to, ".com, .edu, .mil, .net, .org," websites.

2. POLICY

a. VA promotes the secure and effective use of Internet services to improve access to and delivery of information to veterans, their families, and the general public; VA also promotes the secure and effective use of Intranet services to improve access to and delivery of information to VA employees. Information will include the policies, programs, activities, and objectives of VA. Internet services will also be used to obtain information from public and private organizations consistent with applicable legal requirements. Internet and Intranet services will be used as a means of empowering employees in their work.

b. Organizational use of Internet and Intranet services must reflect the mission of VA, and support VA's goals and objectives. These services must support legitimate, mission-related activities of the VA and be consistent with prudent operational, security, and privacy considerations. Organizational use of government office information technology (IT) (equipment, peripherals, etc.) should be consistent with the provisions of any applicable VA Directive.

c. VA Internet and Intranet sites and sites operating on behalf of VA must be designed to support the widest range of potential users and computing platforms and must be compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Secretary of Veterans Affairs.** The Secretary has designated the Department's CIO as the senior agency official responsible for the Department's information technology (IT) programs.

b. **Chief Information Officer.** The CIO is responsible for the effective use of VA's Internet, Intranet and other IT resources, and for agency-wide directives, and policies

governing the use and implementation of Internet and other IT resources. The CIO shall:

- (1) Establish policy and procedural guidance for establishing, operating, and maintaining VA Internet and Intranet sites, including sites operated by non-VA entities for VA;
- (2) Maintain liaisons with Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries and Other Key Officials, to ensure effective dissemination of VA information via the Internet and Intranet;
- (3) Provide technical support consistent with existing CIO responsibilities;
- (4) Review and approve additions and changes to Internet and Intranet policy and procedures as suggested by the VA Web Management Governance Board and the VA 6102 Advisory Committee; and
- (5) Provide recommendations on Internet and Intranet services and risk management issues.

c. VA CIO Information Technology Operations (ITO), (Office of Information and Technology (005)). ITO shall support and manage VA's Internet and Intranet presence and ensure compliance with all federal mandates and guidance, and department-wide initiatives and requirements.

d. VA Web Management Governance Board. The Web Management Governance Board will include representatives from across VA; membership will be limited to VA staff only. This group shall:

- (1) Make recommendations on the use of the Internet/Intranet and the associated websites and services within the VA to the VA CIO;
- (2) Meet quarterly at a minimum; more frequently at the direction of the CIO;
- (3) Provide advice, guidance and information to the VA 6102 Advisory Board as necessary and/or as requested by the VA 6102 Advisory Board.

e. VA 6102 Advisory Board. The VA 6102 Advisory Board will include staff members from across VA who provide communications oversight to their organizations; membership will be limited to VA staff only. This group shall:

- (1) Provide oversight to web activities within their respective organizations as established in this Handbook and as designated by their respective organizations;
- (2) Meet monthly at a minimum; more frequently as needed to provide timely collaboration regarding emergent issues;
- (3) Ensure the uniform application of the requirements, mandates and recommendations discussed in VA Handbook 6102.

(4) Raise issues and request input and guidance from the VA Web Governance Board for issues beyond the scope of the VA 6102 Advisory Board.

f. **Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials.** These officials will ensure the implementation of VA Internet and Intranet policies within their respective administrations and staff offices. These officials will also ensure that VA information and information resources are protected from unlawful and unauthorized use, access, tampering, destruction, and unauthorized release of sensitive information, which is defined as information that requires protection due to the risk and magnitude of loss or harm that could result from inadvertent or deliberate disclosure, alteration, or destruction of the information. The term includes information whose improper use or disclosure could adversely affect the ability of an agency to accomplish its mission, proprietary information, records about individuals requiring protection under the Privacy Act, and information not releasable under the Freedom of Information Act.

g. **Program Office and Facility Site.** The head of each Program Office or facility site (i.e., VBA Regional Office or Center, VHA facility such as a VA Medical Center, NCA facility such as a cemetery) with an official VA Internet/Intranet site shall:

(1) Be responsible for the content of the documents posted on the site (including papers, studies, forms, pictures, and graphics), ensuring that information posted on the identified Internet/Intranet site is current, accurate, factual, relevant to the VA mission, and spell-checked and grammatically correct.

(2) Ensure that VA Internet and Intranet services and sites operating on VA's behalf conform to §508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended;

(3) Ensure that Internet and Intranet site server environments under his/her purview are secured as outlined in VA Handbook 6210, Automated Information Security Procedures, and/or will coordinate with security personnel issues material to the server environments on which their respective sites reside.

(4) Each Program Office/organization with an official Internet and/or Intranet site will appoint a webmaster who provides technical management to maintain the website(s).

(5) Each Program Office/organization will designate a content manager for the website(s) and will be accountable for the information disseminated by a particular website that meets the mission of their respective program or organization.

(Note: While it is preferred that different people serve as webmaster(s) and content manager(s), these roles may be combined if appropriate.)

h. **Webmasters and Content Managers:** The webmaster shall provide technical management to maintain the website(s) and must be knowledgeable about the technical issues regarding the publishing of a web page, including navigation, branding, page formats, metatags, graphics and other attributes that provide the framework and corporate appearance for publishing content. The content manager must be knowledgeable of the VA's communications and public affairs policies, procedures and

organization messages and shall be accountable for the information disseminated by a particular website that meets the mission of their respective program or organization. The content manager ensures that web page content is current, accurate, factual, relevant to the VA and/or Program Office mission, and spell-checked and grammatically correct. Webmasters and content managers are also referred to collectively as Web Managers when responsibility for specific activities overlaps or may be shared.

4. REFERENCES

a. Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch. Part 1 of Executive Order 12674 – Implementing Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch. (5 CFR 2635)

b. Executive Order 13011, Federal Information Technology, §3(a)(1).

c. “Guidance and Model Language for Federal Web Site Privacy Policies,” June 2, 1999, Office of Management and Budget; OMB M99-18.

d. “Privacy Policies and Data Collection on Federal Web Sites,” June 22, 2000, Office of Management and Budget, OMB 00-13.

e. Public Law 105-220. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29USC 794(d)).

f. Public Law 105-220, Section 508.

g. Recommended Executive Branch Model Policy/Guidance on “Limited Personal Use” of Government Office Equipment Including Information Technology, May 19, 1999, Federal CIO Council.

h. VA Directive 6001, Limited Personal Use of Government Office Equipment Including Information Technology.

i. VA Directive 6210, Automated Information Systems Security.

j. VA Directive 6300, Records and Information Management, VA Handbook 6300.1, Records Management Procedures. and VA Handbook 6300.5, Procedures for Establishing and Managing Privacy Act System of Records

k. 5 USC §301.

5. DEFINITIONS

a. **Internet:** A global digital infrastructure available to the public that connects millions of computers. It is a global network of networks, with cross-platform compatibility, using the Internet Protocol (IP) to communicate between computers. The fastest growing part of the Internet is the World Wide Web. Other parts of the Internet include gopher, telnet and ftp.

b. **Intranet:** A private website or portal, secured or password-protected, specifically designed for workers in an organization to conduct internal business. An Intranet is fully comparable to and interoperable with the Internet, but is not readily available to the public. Intranet access may be limited to an entire organization or to an Administration or Program Office.

c. **Program Office.** Any component instrumentality of the VA organization for which a station number and/or routing symbol exists.

d. **Server (Web):** Collection of computer programs that serve web files. The server provides access to one or more collections of documents using web formats and protocols. The VA uses three types of web servers:

(1) Development servers are used as platforms to develop and review web pages before releasing them to the public

(2) Staging servers are used by the Technical Support Office to house files for review and scanning before moving them to the production server.

(3) Production servers contain the current files accessed by VA's websites.

e. **Webmaster.** An Internet and/or Intranet service administrator who possesses the skills, knowledge and ability to work alone, or with a consortium of Information Technology (IT) professionals, to design, publish, and maintain websites that provide a variety of information services to the public and to VA employees. This may also be the individual with primary responsibility for the server. By convention, each Web server maintains a webmaster e-mail address (e.g., webmaster@va.gov) to which suggestions and inquiries about the site may be directed.

f. **Content Manager.** Person knowledgeable about VA's communications, public affairs policies, procedures and organization messages, who is designated to be accountable for the information disseminated by a particular website.